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SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA POLITICAL NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 13-OCTOBER 16

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¶1. (SBU) This was written in partnership with the Open Source Center's Pretoria Bureau. The newsletter is open to contributions from officers in the Embassy or in the Consulates who wish to highlight political trends. Contact Madeline Seidenstricker or Jonathan Smallridge for more information, or to make contributions. The newsletter also is available on the Political Section's blog, "A View from South Africa," found on intelink.gov.

Domestic News

RSA Muslims Fault Academic's Claim of Terror Plot Within Local Community in 2010

¶2. (SBU) Pretoria-based International Institute for Islamic Studies (IIIS) Professor Hussein Solomon issued a paper claiming that "militants" had already established terror cells in South Africa, ahead of the 2010 World Cup; he linked the National Intelligence Agency's (NIA's) recent interception of a telephone call, reportedly made from Khayelitsha, to a supposed Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Shabaab extremist group in Somalia. Voice of the Cape Online reported on 14 October that a Muslim academic, Dr. Rashid Omar, rejected Solomon's allegations. Several VOC contributors likewise dismissed Solomon's claims and called on him to substantiate them. The Al Jamah Party said the IIIS was full of people "most hostile" to Muslims and lacked credibility. However, the percentage of VOC online poll participants who did not agree with Solomon's claims dropped from 82% two years ago to just under 60%. [Website of Voice of the Cape radio station, reporting local and international news of importance to the South African Muslim community; URL: <http://www.vocfm.co.za>]

RSA: Chief of Somali Community Denies Members' Involvement in Terrorism

¶3. (SBU) Spokesmen for Somalis in South Africa also rejected Solomon's charges. Sheikh Abdirashid Afi Sheik, chairperson of the Somali Community Board in Western Cape, told Voice of the Cape on 13 October that "Somali's were happy with the South African government for offering them asylum and would not abuse the privilege by engaging in terrorism activities." A number of Somalis to whom VOC spoke "strongly denied" the allegations fearing these could "incite further local South Africans to act against us," in light of previous xenophobic attacks against them. [Cape Town Voice of the Cape Online in English -- Website of Voice of the Cape radio station, reporting local and international news of importance to the South African Muslim community; URL: <http://www.vocfm.co.za>]

NIA Spokesperson Dismisses Muslim Academic's Claim of Terror Cells in RSA

¶4. (SBU) In an interview with SAfm on 13 October, the NIA sought to

allay fears of possible foreign terrorist attacks ahead of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. NIA spokesperson Lorna Daniels refused to comment on Solomon's terror claims, saying his analysis was not based on accurate information. She added that the NIA was working on "all threats" saying the 2010 preparations was "another major aspect" of the NIA's work. [National SABC radio service, nominally independent but partially funded by government]

RSA Paper Faults Plan To Establish White Farmers in Other African Countries

15. (SBU) The Citizen's 13 October editorial said that Agriculture Minister Tina Joemat-Petersen's announcement that government is supporting a new drive to establish white SA farmers in other African countries "resembles Monty Python-esque absurdity." Joemat-Petersen reportedly told farmers' organization AgriSA that government remained committed to transferring 30% of white-owned farmland to blacks within five years but that "this would leave little room for white farmers to expand," therefore, the government was negotiating deals with five countries. The paper pointed out that South Africa has become a net importer of food over the past two years and that there was "more than anecdotal evidence" that many black farmers were struggling to sustain production on land acquired by them, and that many such farms are lying fallow. Further, the paper added that up to 800 commercial white farmers, pushed by uncertainties over land claims, have already sought greener pastures in countries like Mozambique without government support. So the "sudden concern" for white farmers was "hard to stomach." [Privately-owned weekday newspaper]

Zuma Tells "the Left" To Give Him Space

16. (U) African National Congress (ANC) Secretary general Gwede Mantashe told the ruling party's alliance partners - the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist

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Party (SACP) - to respect the autonomy of the ANC and to give it space to implement its election manifesto. During the Alliance Political Council meeting at Luthuli House in Johannesburg on October 12, the ANC leadership laid down the rules of engagement and told left-leaning organizations to stay out of its affairs. The meeting was attended by ANC top leadership and national office bearers from COSATU and the SACP. The Sowetan newspaper reported that the ANC delegation sought to reaffirm itself as the leader of the alliance, after some senior ANC leaders have accused COSATU of trying to take over the party. (Sowetan, October, 13, 2009)

Service Delivery Protests Continue

17. (U) Service delivery protests are spreading throughout Mpumalanga. In Bethal, community members on October 12 blockaded roads to prevent traffic in the Mzinoni Township, disgruntled residents in Kinross in Mpumalanga started gathering at the local sports ground waiting for Mayor Sipho Nkosi to address them, and in the Siyathuthuka Township near Belfast there were violent protests that led to the arrest of 18 people. (SABCNEWS, October, 13, 2009)

White Farmers Upset in Limpopo

18. (U) Farmers in Mbahela have accused the Limpopo Department of Agriculture of using apartheid-era tactics to take farms to give to cronies. Farmers say the Department "imposed" a partnership between the government and a company to impart skills on previously disadvantaged farmers, which led to some official siphoning off land. Government officials claim that the farmers were warned that the provincial government planned to divide their farms with disadvantaged farmers, and spokesperson Thembi Makhuvele said it was a strategy the department was using to turn agriculture production around in the province. (Sowetan, October, 15, 2009)

RSA: Trade Minister Comments on 'Major' Trade Policy Challenges Facing Country

¶9. (U) Radio SAfm interviewed Trade and Industry Minister Dr. Rob Davies on 13 October on the major trade policy challenges facing South Africa. Davies cited an "active industrial policy" as a major focus of South Africa's trade policies which could affect tariff policy for "high employment" sectors as well as the pursuit of developmental region integration, particularly in South Africa's approach to the Southern African Customs Union and the Southern African Development Community. Asked how realistic were the Millennium Development Goals - particularly halving unemployment and the promise of creating half a million decent jobs - given the economic downturn, Davies said the government's [ANC] manifesto commitment was to "do everything we can to create decent work," adding that "we will be working energetically to create the maximum number of jobs" given the opportunities of the industrial sectors linked to the infrastructure investment program. [National SABC radio service, nominally independent but partially funded by government]

Zuma Returns from Brazil

¶10. (U) President Zuma arrived back in South Africa on October 10, having concluded his two day State Visit to Brazil where he attended a Business Forum in Sao Paulo, met with Brazilian President Lula Da Silva in Brasilia and met with Sao Paulo Governor, Jose Serra. He addressed a Business Forum organized to facilitate interaction between South African and Brazilian business. The forum was attended by a 50-strong delegation of business representatives from South Africa. On the trip, he was accompanied by International Relations and Cooperation Minister (DIRCO) Maite Nkoane Mashabane, Sport and Recreation Minister Makhenkesi Stofile, and Trade and Industry Minister Rob Davies. (The Presidency, October 10)

Government Visit to Sweden a Success

¶11. (U) Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe, accompanied by Deputy Minister Sue van der Merwe, concluded his two day working visit to Sweden after attending the Olaf Palme Day Conference and other series of meetings with the civil society of Sweden. Motlanthe had an informal lunch with the leader of the Social Democratic Party of Sweden, Mona Sahlin, and was the Guest of Honor at the Olaf Palme Day Conference. Motlanthe also met with members of the Swedish Business Community, the Swedish Solidarity Groups and the Chairman of Stockholm Enskilda Bank. (The Presidency, October 11)

Government Focused on Western Sahara

¶12. (U) DIRCO Deputy Minister Ebrahim Ebrahim held discussions with
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the Speaker of the Saharawi National Assembly and Head of the Polisario Front delegation in the negotiation with Morocco, Mahfud Ali Beiba, in Pretoria on October 9. The discussions held with Beiba were within the context of South Africa's continued support for international efforts toward Western Sahara self-determination in accordance with democratic principles and United Nations resolutions. (DIRCO Briefing, October 9)

South Africa, Russia to Meet in Late October

¶13. (U) The Intergovernmental Committee On Trade And Economic Cooperation (ITEC) with the Russian Federation will take place on October 26 and 27 in South Africa. South Africa will be led by DIRCO Minister Mashabane, while the Russian side will be led by Minister of Natural Resources Yuri Trutnev. The two sides are expected to discuss issues about the reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) forum. There is a standing invitation to Zuma from President Dmitry Medvedev to visit Russia within the next six months. (DIRCO Briefing, October 13)

South Africa, DRC to Meet in Late October

¶14. (U) The Bi-National Commission between the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and South Africa will take place on October 30. The meetings will be preceded by a private ministerial meeting. A number of issues are expected to be on the table, including the progress of post-conflict reconstruction, and assistance for the DRC police and security forces. (DIRCO Briefing, October 13)